



PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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For Information Contact Public Affairs
HARRIET BERNICK
Telephone: (602) 514-7736
Pager: (602) 356-0004

ALIEN SMUGGLER RECEIVES 51 MONTHS IN PRISON

TUCSON, ARIZONA – The United States Attorney's Office for the District of Arizona announced today that Leonardo Bermudez-Tiznado, aka Hector Hernandez-Luna, of Mexico was sentenced to 51 months in prison after pleading guilty to Transportation of Illegal Aliens Causing Serious Bodily Injury or Placing a Life in Jeopardy, in violation of 8 U.S.C. §§1324(a)(1)(A)(ii) and 1324(a)(1)(B)(iii). This offense carries a statutory maximum term of imprisonment of 20 years, a \$250,000 fine, and up to three years supervised release.

On March 14, 2002, Leonardo Bermudez-Tiznado was driving a double cab truck with a camper shell containing 53 illegal aliens. A Border Patrol helicopter spotted the truck near Amado, Arizona and continued to follow the truck as it traveled on dirt roads. U.S. Border Patrol agents were alerted and encountered the vehicle south of Green Valley, Arizona. An attempt to stop the vehicle was terminated after the truck reached speeds of over 75 miles per hour. The helicopter continued to follow the truck as it exited I-19 onto the Nogales highway. Bermudez-Tiznado failed to stop at signs and nearly hit several vehicles. A U.S. Customs agent was in the area and attempted to stop the vehicle, but aborted the attempt when the

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truck driven by Bermudez-Tiznado reached a speed of approximately 100 miles per hour. The rear left tire of Bermudez-Tiznado's vehicle disintegrated, causing Bermudez-Tiznado to lose control of the truck which went off road, hit a small embankment and rolled over. The camper shell was ripped off and approximately 40 people were thrown from the back of the truck. The injured were taken to four Tucson hospitals for treatment for their injuries, which included fractured bones, contusions, abrasions, burns and lacerations.

On April 10, 2002, a ten count indictment was filed against Leonardo Bermudez-Tiznado, aka Hector Hernandez-Luna, in the U.S. District Court in Tucson, Arizona, charging 5 counts of Bringing in of Illegal Aliens and Causing Serious Bodily Injury or Placing a Life in Jeopardy and 5 counts of Transportation of Illegal Aliens and Causing Serious Bodily Injury of Placing a Life in Jeopardy. On December 19, 2003, Bermudez-Tiznado plead guilty to count six of the indictment pursuant to a written plea agreement with a range of 41-51 months.

On December 22, 2003, Leonardo Bermudez-Tiznado received a sentence of 51 months imprisonment. United States District Judge Frank R. Zapata presided over the sentencing hearing.

The sentencing hearing was handled by Julia A. Maldonado Soto, Assistant United States Attorney, District of Arizona, Tucson, Arizona.

CASE NUMBER: CR-02-00524
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